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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR PREL IT GLOBAL DEFENSE FORCES IN ITALY](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN OFFICIALS DISCUSS GLOBAL POSTURE REVIEW
WITH US DELEGATION

CLASSIFIED BY: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION EMIL SKODON FOR
REASONS 1.5(B)(D)

1. (C) SUMMARY. A DELEGATION LED BY LINCOLN BLOOMFIELD JR., A/S FOR POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS, DISCUSSED ITALY-SPECIFIC GLOBAL POSTURE REVIEW (GPR) PROPOSALS WITH ITALIAN OFFICIALS FROM THE DEFENSE GENERAL STAFF AND THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON JUNE 16. CHIEF OF DEFENSE (CHOD) ADMIRAL GIAMPAOLO DIPAOLO WAS POSITIVE ABOUT THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE CHANGES PROPOSED FOR SETAF (VICENZA), NAVEUR (NAPLES), 6TH FLEET (GAETA) AND SIGONELLA NAVAL AIR STATION (SIGONELLA/AGUSTA BAY) BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WILL NEED TO BE WORKED. (NOTE: THE DEFENSE MINISTER AND HIS DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR WERE IN LONDON AND HENCE UNAVAILABLE TO MEET WITH THE DELEGATION. END NOTE.) CONSOLIDATION OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF) IN EUROPE AT SIGONELLA/AGUSTA BAY WILL LIKELY INVOLVE AN INCREASED US FOOTPRINT AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS THAT WILL NEED TO BE CAREFULLY EVALUATED, HE SAID. FREEDOM TO DEPLOY QUICKLY FROM SIGONELLA AND VICENZA ALSO WILL BE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE, BUT HE NOTED THAT A PARTICULARLY FAVORABLE POLITICAL CLIMATE EXISTS NOW FOR FINDING A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENT FOR RAPID RESPONSE-TYPE DEPLOYMENTS.

2. (C) IN A SEPARATE MEETING, MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR GIAMPIERO MASSOLO ASSURED THE DELEGATION THAT THE MFA, IN COORDINATION WITH THE MOD, WILL CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE US GPR PROPOSALS AND WILL THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE THE US'S NEED TO BE ABLE TO RAPIDLY DEPLOY FROM ITALIAN INSTALLATIONS. END SUMMARY.

POSITIVE MILITARY RESPONSE

3. (C) A/S BLOOMFIELD AND DEFENSE DASD ANDY HOEHN REVIEWED THE PROPOSALS BEING CONSIDERED FOR CHANGES TO US FORCE POSTURE IN ITALY DURING A JUNE 16 MEETING WITH THE CHOD, HIS CHIEF OF STAFF ADMIRAL BENELLI MANTELLI AND THE HEAD OF DEFENSE POLICY AND PLANNING GENERAL MARANI. BLOOMFIELD EXPLAINED THAT IN EUROPE THE GPR IS INTENDED TO POSITION US FORCES TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO TODAY'S THREATS, AND TO SUPPORT NATO TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS. WHILE TERRORISM, THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST AND PARTS OF ASIA POSE NEW CHALLENGES, BLOOMFIELD STRESSED THAT THE US REMAINS COMMITTED TO ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING IN EUROPE. HOEHN NOTED THE NEED FOR US FORCES TO CHANGE IN COORDINATION WITH NATO EFFORTS TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE, MOBILE AND RESPONSIVE, INCLUDING TO OUT OF AREA THREATS. HE STRESSED THAT TODAY'S THREATS MEAN THAT US AND NATO FORCES MUST BE ABLE TO DEPLOY QUICKLY, WHEN AND WHERE NEEDED. THIS MAKES IT IMPERATIVE THAT APPROPRIATE ARRANGEMENTS BE IN PLACE IN ADVANCE TO ALLOW QUICK RESPONSE FORCES SUCH AS SOF OR THE 173RD BRIGADE TO SURGE WITHOUT DELAY, HE SAID.

4. (C) DIPAOLO SAID THE PROPOSALS TO ADD A THIRD BATTALION TO SETAF AT VICENZA, CONSOLIDATE NAVEUR/6TH FLEET HEADQUARTERS AT NAPLES, LEAVE THE 6TH FLEET FLAGSHIP AT GAETA AND CONSOLIDATE SOF AT SIGONELLA MAKE OPERATIONAL SENSE, FROM A MILITARY PERSPECTIVE. HE NOTED THAT THE CHANGES MAY PROVIDE USEFUL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE BILATERAL TRAINING AND COORDINATION, WHICH ITALY WOULD WELCOME. HOEHN AGREED THAT THE PROPOSALS OFFER MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINTNESS, BETTER BILATERAL COORDINATION AND CLOSER MIL RELATIONS FROM THE TOP ON DOWN. HOEHN, ALONG WITH EUCOM REAR ADMIRAL GOODWIN, CLARIFIED THAT THE CURRENT SOF PROPOSAL ENVISIONS EXPANDED OPERATIONS AT NAS SIGONELLA AND NEIGHBORING AGUSTA BAY; COMISO IS NOT BEING CONSIDERED FOR USE. DIPAOLO ADVISED THAT INCREASING THE US FOOTPRINT AT SIGONELLA AND FINDING ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RAPID, FLEXIBLE DEPLOYMENTS OF SOF AND SETAF FORCES WILL BE SENSITIVE POLITICAL ISSUES. ANY ADDITIONAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AT SIGONELLA WOULD ALSO NEED TO BE EVALUATED. IT WOULD BE IN THE US'S INTEREST TO WORK OUT THESE ISSUES NOW, UNDER THE PRO-AMERICAN BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT, DIPAOLO STRESSED.

5. (C) DIPAOLO FLAGGED THE SLOW PROGRESS ON COMPLETING THE TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS (TAS) CALLED FOR UNDER THE 1995 MOU BETWEEN DOD AND THE MOD (THE "SHELL AGREEMENT") AS ANOTHER BILATERAL POLITICAL ISSUE THAT MUST BE SOLVED SOON. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT RECENT NEGOTIATING DELAYS AND STRESSED THAT, AFTER NEARLY TEN YEARS, THE TAS NOW NEED TO BE CONCLUDED. BLOOMFIELD RESPONDED THAT A STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ITALIAN MILITARY AND A SHARED PERCEPTION OF NEW

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REQUIRE A NEW SECURITY STRATEGY THAT INCLUDES BEING ABLE TO QUICKLY DEPLOY MOBILE FORCES LIKE SOF AND SETAF. DIPAOLO ASSURED THE DELEGATION THAT HE AND OTHER SENIOR ITALIAN OFFICIALS FULLY UNDERSTAND THE TERMS UNDER WHICH THE US NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO USE SOF AND UNITS OF THE 173RD, INCLUDING FOR US PURPOSES THAT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE CONSISTENT WITH ITALIAN POLICIES. HE NOTED ITALY'S LONG HISTORY OF PERMISSIVE MILITARY COOPERATION WITH US FORCES AT ITALIAN INSTALLATIONS, WHICH TIGHTENED UP SOMEWHAT AFTER THE 1998 CAVALESE CABLE CAR ACCIDENT. ITALY WILL ALWAYS TAKE A REALISTIC APPROACH WITH THE US, DIPAOLO SAID, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN ITALY CAN OR WILL TURN A BLIND EYE.

16. (C) THE FIRST STEP IN FINDING AN ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENT TO ACCOMMODATE US REQUIREMENTS IS FOR THE US TO CLARIFY HOW MUCH FREEDOM OF ACTION IT NEEDS, HE SAID. IF THE US DEFENSE AND STATE DEPARTMENTS PRESENT A STATEMENT OF INTENT, DIPAOLO SAID, THE ITALIAN MILITARY WILL REVIEW IT AND MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERS. HE DISCOURAGED PURSUING AN APPROACH THAT INVOLVES PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW OR APPROVAL, WHICH HE SAID WOULD BE VERY SENSITIVE. HE SUGGESTED THE US MAY WANT TO CONSIDER LINKING US MILITARY ACTIVITIES TO COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS, WHICH MIGHT PROVIDE A POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE UMBRELLA TO COVER A WIDE RANGE OF OPERATIONS. HOEHN AGREED THAT A POLITICAL DIALOGUE WOULD BE NEEDED TO AUGMENT EXISTING BILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS IN WAYS THAT WOULD, IDEALLY, WORK AS WELL AS CURRENT ONES HAVE OVER THE YEARS.

MFA OFFICIALS ALSO RECEPTIVE

17. (C) THE DELEGATION ALSO MET WITH THE MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL GIAMPIERO MASOLO AND OTHER MFA REPRESENTATIVES ON JUNE 16. MASOLO SAID US EFFORTS TO RATIONALIZE ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN A STRATEGIC LOCATION SUCH AS ITALY WERE SENSIBLE. MFA NATO AFFAIRS OFFICE DIRECTOR GIOVANNI BRAUZZI EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION THAT US TRANSFORMATION IS OCCURRING IN THE CONTEXT OF NATO TRANSFORMATION SINCE NATO CONTINUES TO BE THE PRIMARY BASIS FOR THE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN ITALY. WHILE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BUILT-IN FLEXIBILITY THAT ALLOW ITALY TO EXTEND ACCESS FOR BILATERALLY AGREED PURPOSES, INITIATIVES OUTSIDE THE NATO CONTEXT OFTEN REQUIRE PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT AND MORE POLITICAL DISCUSSION THAN THOSE UNDER A NATO UMBRELLA, HE EXPLAINED. NOT ALL OPERATIONS WILL BE NATO MISSIONS, BLOOMFIELD RESPONDED, AND THE US WILL NEED AN AGILITY TO USE RAPID RESPONSE FORCES LIKE SOF AND THE 173RD. THE US WOULD LIKE TO ESTABLISH A HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING THAT REFLECTS A SHARED PERCEPTION OF NEW THREATS AND THE NEED TO POSITION MILITARIES TO RESPOND QUICKLY, HE SAID. IT WILL BE USEFUL TO CLARIFY WHAT INFORMATION ITALIAN LEADERS WOULD NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER FOR US FORCES TO DEPLOY FROM ITALIAN INSTALLATIONS WITHOUT PROTRACTED PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION, HE ADDED. MASOLO NOTED THAT US-ITALIAN MILITARY RELATIONS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN EXTREMELY FLEXIBLE AND SAID ITALIAN OFFICIALS WILL CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE US PROPOSALS AND LOOK FOR CREATIVE APPROACHES.

18. (C) IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HOEHN CLARIFIED THAT INPUT FROM ALLIES WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO A REPORT FOR PRESIDENT BUSH THIS SUMMER THAT WILL INDICATE REMAINING ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED AND UPDATE CURRENT GPR PROPOSALS. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSALS WILL THEN BE NEGOTIATED WITH HOST NATIONS. IMPLEMENTATION WILL TAKE SEVERAL YEARS, DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE CHANGES INVOLVED FOR DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. THE US WILL WORK WITH ITALY ON THE TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTING PROPOSED CHANGES ONCE THE DETAILS HAVE BEEN AGREED, HE SAID.

19. (C) COMMENT. THE DELEGATION'S DISCUSSIONS WERE PRODUCTIVE AND CLARIFIED THAT THE ITALIAN MILITARY SEES NO SIGNIFICANT MILITARY OR TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO THE ITALY-SPECIFIC GPR PROPOSALS. A POTENTIAL POLITICAL HURDLE MAY BE THE US NEED FOR ASSURANCES THAT SOF AND THE 173RD FORCES CAN BE DEPLOYED RAPIDLY AND UNILATERALLY FROM ITALIAN INSTALLATIONS BASED ON OPERATIONAL NEED. THE CONSO